DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 142 UD 027 068

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Wittebols, James H.; And Others |
| TITLE | Collecting National Dropout Statistics. |
| INSTITUTION | Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, D.C. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Department of Education, Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | Sep 86 |
| CONTRACT | 300-85-0146 |
| NOTE | 56p.; Appendix contains marginally legible print. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Research/Technical (143) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Definitions; *Dropout Characteristics; *Dropouts; Elementary Secondary Education; *Identification; Individual Characteristics; *Recordkeeping; School Statistics; *State Surveys |

ABSTRACT

This report of the Education Data Project presents the findings of the Task Force on Collecting National Statistics on Dropouts, created to recommend ways of arriving at accurate, comparable, and timely state and national dropout statistics. The major recommended strategy is to agree on specific data to be collected by the states and to establish definitions and specific criteria for collecting the data. The report reviews problems in establishing definitions, and indicates how each state arrives at a definition of a dropout. It also makes general recommendations for collecting dropout data. The report contains four tables and two exhibits that present the dropout data currently collected by each state. An appendix presents in tabular form the components of each state's definition of a dropout, a graduate, an expelled student, and a suspended student. Also included are the names and affiliations of Task Force members, and the names of each state's data collector. (MH)

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COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS
State Education Assessment Center

Education Data Improvement Project

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Center for Statistics

September 1986

ED311142

# COLLECTING NATIONAL DROPOUT STATISTICS

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Improving Universe Data on Schools and School Districts

# COLLECTING NATIONAL DROPOUT STATISTICS

September 1986

James H. Wittebols, Education Data Improvement Project

*Under the Direction of:*
Suzanne E. Triplett, Education Data Improvement Project

*Under Contract to:*
Center for Statistics
U.S. Department of Education

Contract No. 300-85-0146

*Prepared by:*
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This report was prepared with the assistance of Dr. Carol Copple.

## Task Force on Collecting National Statistics on Dropouts

The Task Force on Collecting National Statistics on Dropouts was convened to assist in the development of accurate, comparable, and timely statistics. The members of the Task Force met twice, to exchange ideas and to deliberate many complex issues. Their conclusions provided the framework for the recommendations presented in this paper. The Education Data Improvement Project is immensely grateful for the time and effort put forth by the Task Force members:

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| Leonard Powell | New York State Department of Education |
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Major Contributors
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State Profiles of School and School District Universe Data

The Common Core of Data Coordinators, designated by their chief state school officers as the official state liaisons with the Center for Statistics, are the primary respondents to the Project. The data presented here could not have been developed without substantial efforts by these data coordinators, who provided the information necessary to present state by state comparisons of data collection practices. Many thanks to those listed below who were instrumental in completing the Shuttle and kindly providing further information via telephone calls and verification procedures.

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## PREFACE

This document is one of a series of reports resulting from the Council of Chief State School Officers' Education Data Improvement Project. The Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Statistics, is a joint effort of the states and the federal government to improve the quality and timeliness of data collected, analyzed, and reported by the Center. The Project, initiated by the Council as the first effort of its State Education Assessment Center, coincided with the Department of Education's extensive redesign of the national elementary/secondary education statistical data system. Improvement of the Center's Common Core of Data, collected annually from state education agencies, is the Project's primary goal.

In November 1984, the Council of Chief State School Officers voted to "work actively with the National Center for Education Statistics (currently the Center for Statistics) to ensure that reporting of data from all sources is accurate and timely." This vote committed the Council to improving the comprehensiveness, comparability, and timeliness of data reported to the Center for Statistics by the state education agencies.

In several recent speeches and interviews, Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), listed four goals for strengthening the nation's ability to achieve educational excellence. The Department of Education's goal - to significantly improve the nation's educational statistical information base: both in the amount of data and its quality - suggests substantial interest in the work and goals of the Education Data Improvement Project.

The Center for Statistics and the states jointly share responsibility for a statistical system in education that is inadequate for today's needs. This project is one effort wherein they are working together to make the basic system efficient and effective.

The goals of the Project are to describe state collection of data elements currently contained in the Common Core of Data and those that might be added to make the Common Core of Data adequate and appropriate for reporting on the condition of the nation's schools, and to make recommendations to states and the Center for Statistics for making the Common Core of Data more comprehensive, comparable and timely. During this first Project year, the focus has been on the school and school district universe files.

Regarding the universe files, the Project has three purposes: (1) to identify all states collecting specific data elements, (2) to specify in detail the definitions and specifications used by each of the states for each data element, and (3) to isolate discrepancies in ways different states define and measure those various elements. This current report presents recommendations designed to assist states in the creation of meaningful and comparable data on dropouts and school leavers.

# INTRODUCTION

## Universe Data on Schools and School Districts

The Council of Chief State School Officers, jointly with the U. S. Department of Education's Center for Statistics, is conducting a project to improve the quality and timeliness of nationally reported data on elementary and secondary education. The Education Data Improvement Project was designed to promote and facilitate the reform and refinement of the Center for Statistics' national education statistical data system.

One major aspect of the Project is systematic assessment and comparison of state collection practices for school and school district universe data. The current universe files contain listings of every elementary and secondary public school (approximately 87,000) and all local public school districts (approximately 16,000) in every state, U. S. Territory, and the District of Columbia. There are three major purposes for universe files: (1) to provide official state-by-state listings of public elementary and secondary schools and school districts in this country, (2) to provide minimum information necessary for selection of national, regional and state representative samples of schools and school districts, and (3) to provide basic statistical data about all schools and school districts.

## Project Processes and Analyses

The Education Data Improvement Project's data collection process is multi-faceted in that data are collected from several sources and supplemented either by individual and group interviews, or by task forces and study groups. Over the several iterations, true state and national profiles will emerge. Where discrepancies are found across a number of states, meetings will be convened to arrive at consensus on specific data elements, definitions, or measurement procedures. Where problems are found with a single state or with a few states, negotiations will establish crosswalks[1] between the state(s) and the Center for Statistics. Where states have better, more efficient definitions and procedures than currently used by the Center for Statistics, recommendations will be made to change the national system.

## This Report

The first year of the Project is described in a series of reports under the general title, "Improving Universe Data on Schools and School Districts." This report is part of that series; other reports in the series include "Technical Report: Conceptual Framework," "Development of a Shuttle for Verifying Data Elements Collected by State Departments of Education and Reported to the U. S. Department of Education's Center for Statistics," and "A Compendium: State Profiles of School and School District Universe Data." Several white papers complete the series, including "Data Elements on the School and School District Universe Files to Permit Sampling for National, Regional, and State Studies," "Federal Program Information on School and School District Universe Files," and "Summary: State Collection Practices on Universe Data Elements." This report, "Collecting National Dropout Statistics," describes the recommendations of the Task Force for more accurate, comparable, and timely state and national dropout statistics.

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1 A crosswalk provides a method for translating data collected by states into categories and definitions comparable to those proposed by the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Statistics. This allows states to maintain the data for their own purposes while providing a bridge to the national educational data system.

A major component of the Project's work was to describe what statistics states are currently collecting, and to note the similarities and differences among the states. Building upon the current data collection practices by states, the Project made recommendations designed to incorporate the best practices of states, while reducing the data collection burden for as many states as possible. The major strategy recommended for improving dropout statistics is to obtain agreement on data elements to be collected across all states, and to establish definitions and specific criteria to be used by all states in collecting these elements. The report concludes with a series of specific recommendations from the the Project, a table that presents the data element specifications, a schedule for reporting dropout statistics, and an across-state summary of the definitions of dropouts, graduates, and expelled and suspended students.

The Task Force on Collecting National Dropout Statistics was integral in the discussion and recommendations presented in this report. The Task Force was composed of representatives from all facets of the educational community--state education agency representatives, local education agency representatives, research experts in the area of dropouts, representatives from national education associations, U.S. Department of Education representatives, and project staff. The Task Force met twice in 1986, and developed the framework for the recommendations proposed below.

## OVERVIEW

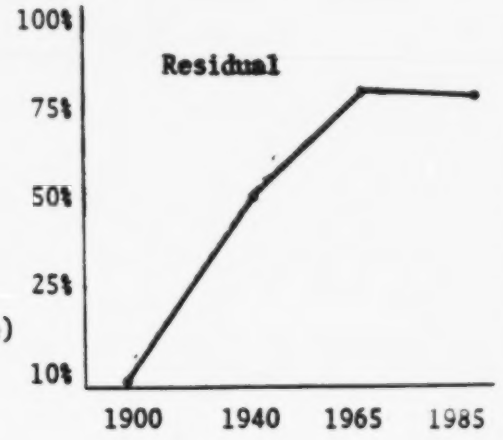
According to figures from the Center for Statistics, the percentage of school-age Americans receiving formal recognition for finishing high school has grown from 6 percent in 1900 to more than 76 percent in 1965, when it reached its peak. During the last 20 years, the graduation rate has remained steady at about 75 percent. These percentages are based on the number of diplomas awarded by public schools each year, with the statistics compared to ninth grade enrollment figures for the same age group four years earlier.

In 1983, U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell released the first "Wall Chart," a compilation of state education statistics. The Wall

Chart computed a graduation rate for each state, and ranked states and the District of Columbia from 1 to 51. In subsequent years, the rates were adjusted for interstate migration rates and for in-school students served in non-graded situations. The 1984 adjusted rates (the latest available) ranged from a high of 89.3 percent in Minnesota to a low of 55.2 percent in the District of Columbia, with a U.S. average of 70.9 percent.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

| Year | Graduation Rate (Not Adjusted) | Residual (Non-Completion Rate) |
|---|---|---|
| 1900 | 6% | 94% |
| 1940 | 50% | 50% |
| 1965 | 76% | 24% |
| 1985 | 75% | 25% |




The Wall Chart revealed significant variations from state to state. Even though the literature had identified these variations before, the format of the Wall Chart, and media coverage of its contents, focused considerable attention on the state rankings.

The graduation rate has become a commonly-used indicator of the condition of education in this country, with the residual considered the national dropout rate. Consequently, using this interpretation of the Wall Chart, state dropout rates were reported as ranging from 11 percent to 45 percent. These statistics are alarming - is it possible that in some states, nine of every twenty students drop out of high school? At this point we do not have the answer, and, with the current status of national education statistics, we cannot find the answer.

Earlier this year, after an extensive study, the U.S. Bureau of Census reported that the national dropout rate is 16 percent. These Census Bureau figures suggest several possible interpretations: First, dropout rates may not be as high as we have been led to believe; Second, graduation rate may not be a good measure for inputing dropout statistics. Further, many educators and researchers question the quality of all available education statistical data. Researcher Jane L. David, in a paper commissioned by the Center for Statistics, states, "If the data continue to be as inaccurate in the future as they have in the past, all other issues are moot. (1985)."

Ramsay Selden, director of the Council of Chief State School Officers' State Education Assessment Center, in an interview with Education Week (February 26, 1986), identified comparability as a major problem with current data. "Even what one would think are fairly straightforward statistics on education," Selden insisted, "like student attendance or completion of school, are complicated by the fact that states use different definitions and procedures to collect those data and report them to the government."

Selden continued by describing the role of the Council in improving national statistics. "One of the services we can provide," he said, "is to coordinate between states and the federal government to collect more comparable, more timely data."

This report describes the Council's recommendations for more accurate, comparable, and timely state and national dropout statistics. The recommendations presented within, if accepted by the states, provide the basis for constructing a national reporting system (i.e., model) for state-by-state dropout rates. If the recommendations are adopted, the full scale model must then be developed, field tested, refined, and implemented.

The Education Data Improvement Project focused on a "dropout" statistic, rather than other measures of school completion or on a derived statistic, for several reasons. It was the Project's judgment that even when other measures are used, educators and the media convert them to

indicators of the dropout problem. So if the need is for a dropout statistic, then the Council has responsibility for assisting states in developing a valid and reliable measure, and implementing procedures for accurate and timely collection and reporting.

There is general agreement among educators and the general public on the definition of a dropout. James S. Catterall, in a paper written for the Rand Corporation in 1985, concluded that there are four basic problems with dropout data:

> "the construct of dropout is straightforward and causes little confusion -- the dropout has left school and is not progressing toward the diploma."

According to Catterall, the problems in developing a national dropout statistic, while complex and great, are practical in nature.

(1) not all states collect statistics,
(2) states that collect statistics collect them on different grade levels,
(3) schools do not systematically keep records of students who leave or of new enrollees, and
(4) there is no standard length of time for determining when a student who has left school becomes a dropout.

These problems, given time and resources, can be resolved. It will also be necessary to develop new collection and reporting mechanisms at the national level, since the Center for Statistics does not currently request such a statistic from states. The purpose of this report is to present, in detail, a model which overcomes the problem areas, to create meaningful and comparable dropout and school leaver statistics.

## ISSUES IN DEVELOPING A NATIONAL DROPOUT STATISTIC

If we are to collect comparable dropout data across all states, we must agree on the set of data elements which comprise the different ways students leave school, the definitions of those data elements, and how each of them are to be collected and reported. In this effort, the first step is defining "dropout," in a general way and then in specific and operational detail. At a general level, the Task Force defined a dropout as:

> "A student who (for any reason other than death) leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution."

Discussed below are the major problems addressed in making this definition operational and in collecting reliable and valid data.

### Who is "a student"? (Who is "eligible to drop out"?)

To count individuals dropping out of school, first we must agree on the base population - who is in school, who is a student? This issue is not as straightforward as it may seem, because there is considerable variation among states when they define this base population. For example, some states include students in special education and other ungraded programs; some do not. Some states count students in juvenile and mental institutions; others do not. One state counts only students below the compulsory school attendance age; one state counts only students above compulsory attendance age.

The data's purpose is to assist in the determination of the base school population, from which some students drop out. If we want dropout statistics to give us information about the condition of the educational system and to assist in policy decisions, we must define who is to be counted. Are students beyond the compulsory school attendance age, who leave school before successful completion, part of the dropout phenomenon that we are trying to index? If so, those students must be included in the base population. Do we consider school-age individuals who leave prison or other institutions where they are incarcerated, as dropouts? If not, we should not count them in the base population.

What is "leaving school?" What is "transferring?"

In counting dropouts, what kinds of change in student status do we want to consider "leaving school"? For instance, Suspended student, have they "left school"? "dropped out"? what about expelled students? Some students may be shifted from secondary school to a mental institution, juvenile institution, or prison -- have those students dropped out or transferred? Do we want to include as a dropout the student who moves from a regular school to an alternative school, to a vocational education program, or to instruction at home? These are among the categories of students for which practice has not been comparable across states or districts. In establishing the operational definition of "dropout", each of these situations was carefully considered, first, from the standpoint of the utility of data, and then from the feasibility, or the availability of information at the state level.

In general, the Task Force agreed that a student is not dropping out when he is shifted from a conventional elementary or secondary school program into another fulltime and state-approved educational program or other institution deemed appropriate for the student (including correctional institutions or institutions that serve emotionally disturbed youth). Similarly, a student that leaves public school to go to a nonpublic school, or to pursue a program of home-based instruction is viewed as transferring rather than dropping out. Students out of school for only temporary periods, such as suspensions or hospitalizations, are not seen as having "left school." By contrast, it was decided that expelled students, while technically "pushouts" rather than dropouts, are part of the school-leaver group that are logically identified as dropouts.

Although it was generally agreed that students transferring to another school are not dropouts, it is not a simple matter to know when they have done so, particularly when they transfer to nonpublic schools. In states where large numbers of students go from public middle schools to nonpublic secondary schools, the number of students for whom there are no transcript requests may be substantial. The large urban school districts have an especially difficult time keeping track of where their students go. In the absence of a national tracking system, schools must include in the dropout category, "those students not known (on the basis of transcript request or other information) to have enrolled in another school." The inclusion of students who may have transferred, however, will overestimate the number of dropouts.

What is a "graduate?"

A "graduate" is usually defined as a student who completes his or her program of study in a public or nonpublic secondary-level school. The definitional issues center around what constitutes a legitimate program of study. The Task Force agreed that a student is counted as a graduate upon award of a formal high school diploma, or upon completion of an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), a Vocational Education program, or other such state-approved, fulltime program. One situation requiring careful specification is the alternative high school program, in which the degree conferred is the GED, but fulltime coursework is provided. Students completing these programs, it was decided, are considered graduates, since these are state-approved educational alternative programs. By contrast, students who leave the school system and complete a GED degree outside the system are <u>not</u> graduates (even though they take some part-time or short-term GED preparation course).

When should enrollment/dropouts be counted?

Timing presents a major difference states need to resolve -- to decide whether to employ a fall-to-fall or a fall-to-spring count of dropouts. By using a fall-to-spring tally of dropouts, schools fail to count students who leave during the summer and do not return in the fall. Task Force members agreed that a fall-to-fall enrollment count provides a more accurate accounting of students.

Although states and localities vary in the dates on which enrollment is taken, every state has a fall enrollment count, which they report to the Center for Statistics for the Common Core of Data. Setting a single date for counting enrollment was not seen as important or advisable; local preferences are affected by many factors influencing timing, including such elements as when school begins, when students of migrant families enter school, or when teacher strikes are resolved. Consequently, we recommend establishing a "window" of fall dates within which states count enrollment.

Are there other important statistics to report, in order to make the dropout picture more complete?

The Task Force saw the dropout statistic as one indicator, measuring how schools are serving the student population. We also want to know what proportion of individuals are competing in the job market without benefit of "a high school education," an asset that can have a substantial effect on employability. With respect to the second concern, we might want to know not only how many students have secondary school diplomas but also how many have some type of high school equivalency degree, such as the GED. The Task Force suggested that, along with figures on the proportion of students that drop out or graduate, it would be useful to present figures on students that complete high school equivalency degrees through alternative means.

Although for some purposes it might be desirable to report alternate completer data by age (e.g., under 25), this information is not currently available in most states.

Within dropout/graduate counts, what breakdowns in the data are needed?

Race/Ethnicity. Because research suggests that proportions of dropouts vary substantially among different ethnic/racial groups, Task Force members consider it important to collect data by ethnic group. If one state has a high black or Hispanic population while another state has a different composition of students, the former may have a high overall dropout rate despite the fact that for some groups of students the dropout rate is low. When looking at changes in the dropout rate as a function of policy changes, shifts in the economy, and other factors, it is important to be able to note differential patterns of change in different ethnic groups.

Sex. National dropout rates for males and females do not differ significantly, but research on students who drop out before graduation suggests significant correlations between sex and racial/ethnic groups. Therefore, to provide a realistic national picture, dropout data should be collected by sex within ethnic/racial group. Collecting dropout data by sex across categories is not worthwhile.

Grade Level. The other useful breakdown in reporting enrollment, dropout, and graduate data is grade level. States often report dropout statistics by grade ranges. However, states vary considerably in grades and grade clusters included in their schools, and in the grade clusters they report. This variation makes it difficult to obtain data on the same grade ranges. For instance, one school may cluster grades K-8, while another may cluster grades 6-8 or grades 7-9. When reporting data, some states report for a 7-12 grade span, while others report for a 9-12 or 10-12 grade span.

Ungraded students will either have to be placed in a category of their own or assigned to a grade. To avoid creating another separate dropout category (and adding to the number of cells), the Task Force recommends that ungraded students be assigned to grades, on the basis of age, for the purposes of counting enrollment and dropouts.

What comparisons do we want to be able to make using the dropout and graduation data?

As the Chief State School Officers have noted, it is more useful to compare "like with like." If we are comparing states (or districts), it is more valid and useful to compare those that share significant characteristics such as:

- Region;
- Population size or density (and/or urbanicity);
- Racial/Ethnic composition;
- Socioeconomic status (SES) of residents (e.g., percent poverty);
- Financial resources of state/locality;
- Adult educational attainment; and
- Percent population (or student population) with limited English proficiency (LEP)

What practical issues must be resolved?

At a broader level than the technical adequacy and feasibility issues discussed above, several general issues have been given serious

consideration throughout the work of the Project and the Task Force. These issues, discussed below, include disincentives to accurate reporting, burdens placed on data collectors, and timeframes for implementing the collection process.

Disincentives to accurate reporting. As Task Force members noted, there are powerful disincentives to accurate reporting of dropout data at the school, local, and state levels. Sometimes funds are tied to low dropout rates, and dropout rates are widely viewed as indicators of school performance. Since identifying a student as a dropout has been far from clear-cut, data providers are often in the position of making subjective judgments. The major approach to reducing the power of disincentives is to establish clear and objective criteria for defining dropouts, thus limiting subjectivity in counting.

Burden. It is important to avoid excessive demands on data providers, particularly at the school level. The dropout and graduate data should be clearly defined, and should not duplicate current State Education Agency data collection efforts.

Where possible, school practice should be considered in planning the system for collecting dropout data. For instance, since most schools perform an enrollment count in the fall, if a system for gathering dropout data is designed to coincide with this enrollment count, then the schools will have to make less of an adjustment. Avoiding unnecessary inconvenience to schools is a major consideration in planning data collection.

Timeframe for Implementation. Necessary changes and additions by data providers cannot be made overnight. It is anticipated that the earliest date for implementing the new data requirements is the 1987-88 school year, which means that there will be no dropout statistics (using the fall-to-fall system) until 1988-89. Although it is important to specify at the outset the complete set of data elements and breakdowns that will be obtained (e.g., racial/ethnic), the time it takes to set up procedures and forms to ensure that all these data can be gathered realistically necessitates that not all data elements and breakdowns have to be reported the first year.

## AVAILABLE DROPOUT (AND RELATED) STATISTICS: FINDINGS FROM STATE PROFILES

The Education Data Improvement Project is charged with making recommendations which will facilitate the collection of more comprehensive, comparable, and timely education statistics, reported by the states to the Center for Statistics. A major component of the Project's work is to describe the statistics currently collected by states, and to note similarities and differences among states. Building on the current data collection practices of states, the Project makes recommendations designed to incorporate the best practices of states while reducing data collection burden for as many states as possible.

The Project, cooperatively with state education agencies, developed individual state profiles of school and school district universe files, which describe how states define various measurement-related terms and data elements. (The process of developing the state profiles is described in "A Compendium: State Profiles of School and School District Universe Data," published June 1986, by the Council of Chief State School Officers.)

The findings of current data practices related to dropout statistics suggest the magnitude of additional state-level effort, if the recommendations in this report are implemented. They also suggest state-by-state modifications necessary to provide comparable data. The state-by-state data for these definitions and elements are reported in the Appendix.

## Dropout Statistics

Most states (40, or 82 percent of responding states) report they currently collect some information on dropouts. Table 1 provides an across-state summary of data collected; Table 2a provides a state-by-state analysis of data collection practices. The Appendix is organized to show how individual states use a basic definition, and to show state-specific variations from that definition.

The elements of the basic definition of dropout are as follows:

Student who withdraws from membership:

- withdrawal occurs during regular elementary school term
- withdrawal occurs during regular secondary school term
- failure to graduate from secondary school (grade 12)
- failure to complete an equivalent program of studies
- withdrawal occurs regardless of compulsory attendance age
- withdrawal occurs even if a minimum amount of school work has been completed

Twenty-five responding states indicate agreement with the basic definition of dropout. Other states differ from the definition with respect to one or more specific elements, such as whether to include as part of the base population (i.e., students eligible to drop out of school), elementary school students or students over or under compulsory school attendance age. Thus, while there are certainly common elements among all states collecting dropout statistics, there is variation among states on how to define a dropout. (For state-by-state breakdowns, see Appendix).

Of 49 responding state education agencies, 40, or 82 percent, report counting students who drop out of school. More than half (22 states) of those agencies collect this data at the school level, while the others collect it at the district level. More than half of the states collecting dropout data catagorize the data by racial/ethnic group and by sex.

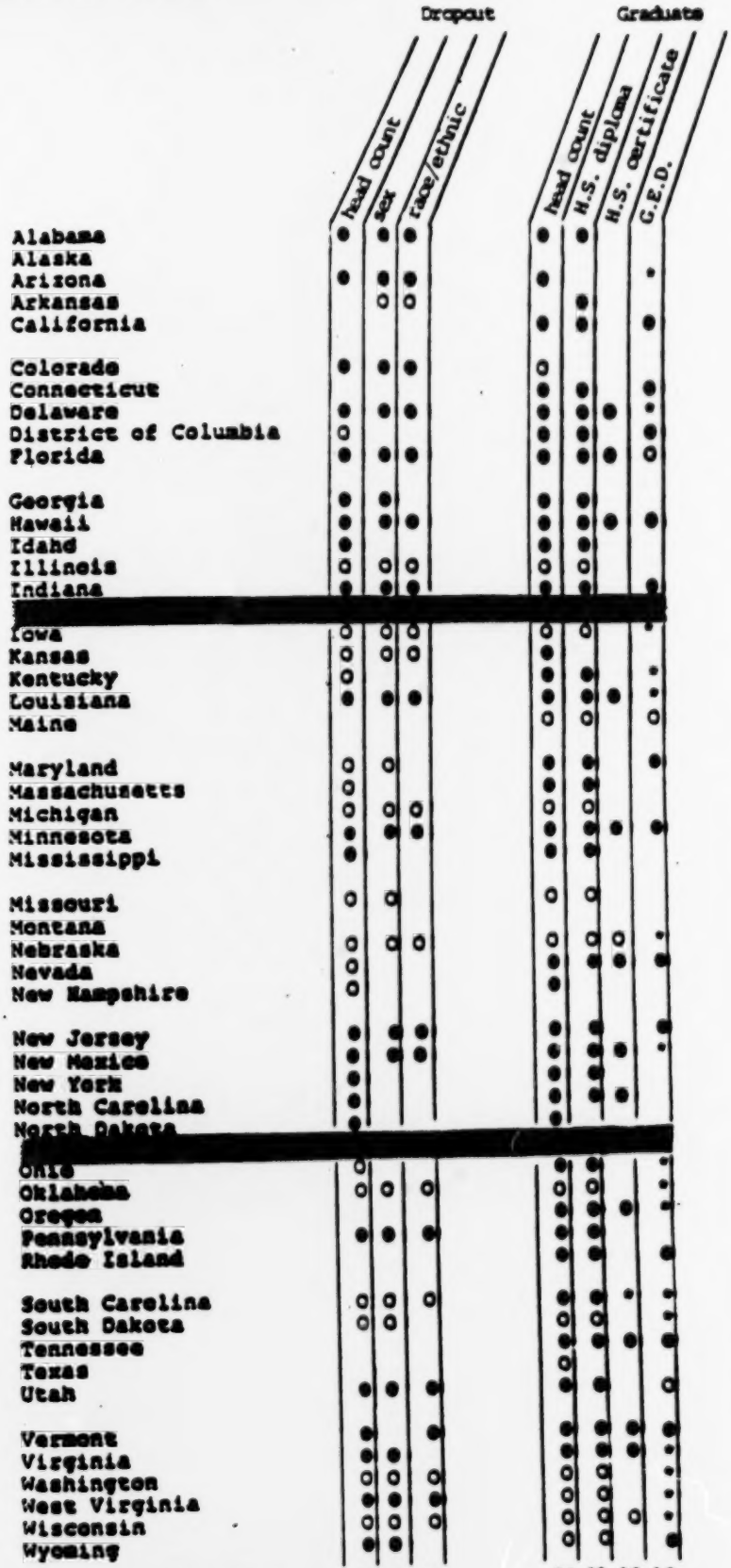
States vary in the kinds of school leavers they include in their statistics. Thirteen states explicitly exclude transfers to other schools from dropout counts. We do not know how other states deal with transfers, because many states leave the criteria for dropout to local discretion.

TABLE 1

Statistics on Dropouts, Graduates and Expelled and Suspended Students: Across State Summaries

| Data Element | Number of States |
|---|---|
| **DROPOUTS** | |
| Collect Dropout Statistics | |
| School by race | 15 |
| School District by race | 10 |
| Definition of Dropout | |
| agree with basic definition | 25 |
| developing new definition | 2 |
| do not collect data on dropouts | 3 |
| Measurement Considerations | |
| Transfers | |
| includes transfers to nonpublic school | 1 |
| excludes transfers to another school | 13 |
| Other Leavers | |
| includes expelled | 32 |
| includes educated at home | 8 |
| includes incarcerated | 20 |
| includes mental patients | 15 |
| includes military enlistees | 34 |
| includes GED | 21 |
| Counting Procedures | |
| includes summer losses | 24 |
| counted by grade | 41 |
| PK-12 | 1 |
| K-12 | 12 |
| 7-12 | 15 |
| 8-12 | 1 |
| 9-12 | 12 |
| counted by grade span | 4 |
| K-12 | 1 |
| 1-12 | 1 |
| 9-12 | 2 |
| no criteria for who is included as dropout or locally determined | 22 |
| determined by no transcript request | 11 |
| determined by number of days absent | 10 |
| 5 days | 2 |
| 10 days | 3 |
| 14 days | 1 |
| 15 days | 2 |
| 20 days | 1 |
| 45 days | 1 |
| can be counted twice within 1 year | 10 |
| can be counted twice over 2 or more years | 18 |
| includes between term leavers | 31 |

TABLE 2a. STATE-BY-STATE SUMMARY OF DATA ON DROPOUTS AND GRADUATES



In other categories of school leavers, 32 states include expelled students, and 34 states include military enlistees in their dropout counts. There is less agreement about other categories of dropouts: only 8 states include educated-at-home students, while 21 states include GED completers. These are factors which limit comparability of dropout statistics across states.

Another factor in identifying dropouts is the necessity of establishing a criteria for determining when a student has dropped out. Eleven states use the lack of a transcript request as the factor which classifies a student as a dropout, while ten states use numbers of days absent, ranging from 5 to 45 in these states. The largest group of states (22), allow local districts to establish the criteria -- there are no state-level guidelines. The time span included in dropout counts also varies. Twenty-four states incorporate summer "losses" in their dropout counts; 31 states include those who have left between terms. The noninclusion of summer losses in a dropout count by half the states creates serious comparability problems, since a large proportion of dropouts are "losses."

One area of convergence among the states is the grade-by-grade breakdowns for which dropouts can be reported. Forty-one states record their dropout counts by grade, with variations in the range of grades included. Of these states, 12 report a dropout count for grades 9-12, while 25 supply a count for grades 7-12.

Duplicate counting is another particular problem for getting an accurate picture of the number of dropouts. Ten states indicate that, when counting dropouts, it is possible to record the same student twice. That is, a student who leaves, returns, and leaves again within the same school year is counted as two dropouts. An even larger number of states report that a student who drops out more than once over a period of two or more years may be counted each time she/he drops out.

To summarize, most states currently collect dropout statistics, and report dropout statistics by grade level. The majority of those states report the statistics by race/ethnicity and sex. Although states

generally agree on elements of the differences, those differences are significant enough to make dropout statistics noncomparable across states.

Graduates

There is general consensus across the states in terms of definition; 46 states agreed with the basic definition of graduate. Yet one confounding issue emerged: the variety of diplomas given by each state. Many states have multi-tiered approaches to graduation -- giving several kinds of exit documents such as diplomas, certificates of completion, and certificates of attendance. States include documents other than regular high school diploma in their graduation count. With the emergence of minimum competency tests as a graduation requirement in many states, it is reasonable to expect that the number of exit documents in each state will increase. There are currently no criteria to determine whether a student who completes the 12th grade but fails to pass the competency exam should be counted as a graduation, if a "certificate of completion" or "certificate of attendance" is given to such a student.

In the area of alternative completion of high school, most states treat GED completers similarly -- 42 states do not include GED recipients as high school graduates - although 4 states do include such recipients in their graduation count.

Expelled and Suspended Students

Data on students suspended or expelled from school are not widely collected across states. (see Table 2b) Eighteen states currently count those expelled, and 11 states count suspended students. Twenty-nine states indicate that they do not collect any data on expelled students; 33 states indicate they do not collect data on suspended students. With respect to definitions, many states agree with the basic definition but have various discrepancies, such as length of or duration of the suspension or expulsion.

TABLE 2b. STATE-BY-STATE SUMMARY OF DATA ON SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS

| | Suspended Student | | | | Expelled Student | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | head count | grade | race/ethnic | sex | head count | grade | race/ethnic | sex |
| Alabama | | | | | | | | |
| Alaska | | | | | | | | |
| Arizona | | | | | | | | |
| Arkansas | | | | | | | | |
| California | | | | | | | | |
| Colorado | | | | | | | | |
| Connecticut | | | | | | | | |
| Delaware | | | | | | | | |
| District of Columbia | X | X | | X | | | | |
| Florida | X | | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Georgia | | | | | | | | |
| Hawaii | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Idaho | | | | | | | | |
| Illinois | X | | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Indiana | | | | | X | | | |
| Iowa | | | | | | | | |
| Kansas | | | | | | | | |
| Kentucky | | | | | X | X | | |
| Louisiana | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Maine | X | | | X | X | | | X |
| Maryland | | | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Massachusetts | | | | | X | | | |
| Michigan | | | | | | | | |
| Minnesota | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Mississippi | | | | | | | | |
| Missouri | | | | | | | | |
| Montana | | | | | | | | |
| Nebraska | | | | | X | X | X | X |
| Nevada | | | | | | | | |
| New Hampshire | | | | | X | | | |
| New Jersey | X | X | X | X | X | | | |
| New Mexico | | | | | | | | |
| New York | | | | | | | | |
| North Carolina | X | X | | | X | X | | |
| North Dakota | | | | | | | | |
| Ohio | | | | | | | | |
| Oklahoma | | | | | | | | |
| Oregon | | | | | | | | |
| Pennsylvania | | | | | X | | X | X |
| Rhode Island | | | | | | | | |
| South Carolina | X | X | | X | X | X | | X |
| South Dakota | | | | | | | | |
| Tennessee | X | | | | X | X | | |
| Texas | | | | | | | | |
| Utah | | | | | | | | |
| Vermont | | | | | | | | |
| Virginia | | | | | | | | |
| Washington | | | | | | | | |
| West Virginia | | | | | | | | |
| Wisconsin | | | | | X | | | |
| Wyoming | | | | | | | | |
| | 11 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 18 | 9 | 7 | 10 |

## Summary

Definitions and data collection in two of the three areas discussed here--dropouts, expelled, and suspended students--vary to such an extent that these data cannot be compared across the states. With regard to graduates, there is greater consensus among the states, both in definition and in data collection practices. There is some variation in the kinds of exit documents included with regular diplomas in the high school graduation count.

## NATIONAL DROPOUT STATISTIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education Data Improvement Project has formulated recommendations on the basis of: (1) data collected from the states about current practices in gathering dropout data and summarized on individual state profiles; and (2) work of the Task Force on collecting national statistics on dropouts. Some of the recommendations were explicitly stated by the Task Force; others used Task Force input as a starting point but went beyond what was dealt with in the Task Force meetings. In some cases, we have provided additional detail or specification in areas where the Task Force simply did not have time "to dot every 'i' and cross every 't'." In instances where the Task Force was not able to reach a consensus on how to resolve an issue, we have made judgments from the options discussed as to the strongest and most viable course of action.

The major strategy recommended for improving dropout statistics is to agree on data elements to be collected across all states; and to establish definitions and specific criteria to be used by all states in collecting these elements. Without a national system for tracking all students, it is not possible to collect dropout data and be certain that no students have fallen through the statistical cracks. We believe that the quality of dropout statistics can be significantly upgraded by rigorously specifying who should and should not be counted as dropouts, by defining who should and should not be counted in the base population, by determining what co-statistics and contextual statistics should be counted, and by collecting all data comparably across states.

Major recommendations with respect to gathering national dropout statistics are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION: Collect data for reporting a dropout rate and two co-statistics: graduation rate, and "nongraduate completer" rate. (By co-statistic we mean that to be meaningful dropout rate it must be reported conjointly with both graduation and nongraduate completer rates).

A set of three indicators is needed to reflect different parts of the total picture: students who are dropping out of school, students who are completing their programs of study, and students who are completing a high school equivalency through alternative routes. Forty states currently collect statistics on dropouts; forty-eight report graduation rate. The collection of data on the graduation rate will require modifications by some states, with 12 states required to begin collecting data.

RECOMMENDATION: Collect each data element according to a set of specific definitions and criteria standardized across states.

The definitions and specific criteria for counting total student number (the base population), dropouts, graduates, and nongraduate completers are shown in Exhibit 1.

RECOMMENDATION: Obtain the dropout count on the basis of a fall-to-fall total student count.

The student enrolled in the fall of Year A but not enrolled in the fall of Year B are counted as dropouts, unless otherwise accounted for, as indicated in Exhibit 1. Exhibit 2 illustrates the recommended reporting schedule.

RECOMMENDATION: Begin counting enrollment/dropouts in the 7th grade and derive the dropout rate on a grade-by-grade basis.

Because sizable numbers of students leave school before enrolling in the ninth grade, it is necessary to collect data on seventh and eighth graders to get an accurate picture of the magnitude of the dropout problem. Computing the dropout rate on a grade-by-grade basis accounts for students who drop out over the summer and students who shift grades (e.g., are retained).

EXHIBIT 1

DATA ELEMENT SPECIFICATIONS

## Total Student Count

Total Student Count is counted in the fall and includes all students on the school rolls. It is not an attendance count but an unduplicated count of those registered.

Below are some groups with respect to which practice has varied in the past. They are grouped according to whether they should or should not be counted.

YES: Include in enrollment count

- Students in special programs or ungraded programs, e.g., Special Ed., alternative public school programs
- Students beyond the compulsory school age who have not graduated
- Students who are temporarily out of school because of extended illness, suspension, etc.

NO: Do not include in enrollment count

- Students in nonpublic schools
- Students in public institutions other than elementary/secondary schools
  - Prisons
  - Mental institutions
  - Juvenile institutions
  - Adult training centers

## Graduates

A graduate is a student who completes his/her program of study in a public or nonpublic secondary-level school.

Below are some groups with respect to which practice has varied in the past. They are listed according to whether they should or should not be counted as graudates.

YES: Include in graduate count

- Any student receiving a certificate of completion (or other designation) conferred by a public or nonpublic educational institution to indicate that the student has completed his/her program of study, e.g.,
  - certificate of attendance
  - completion of IEP by Special Ed student
  - completion of secondary level Voc. Ed program
  - completion of state-approved fulltime, alternative secondary school (even when the degree granted is GED).

NO: Do not include in graduate count

- Any student leaving school and completing GED or other high school equivalency outside of a state approved and fulltime secondary school (for instance, the student takes a GED preparation course several hours a week).

## Dropouts

A dropout is a student who (for any reason other than death) leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution.

Below are some groups with respect to which practice has varied in the past. They are grouped according to whether they should or should not be counted as dropouts.

YES: Include in dropout count

- Students who enter the military
- Students who are expelled and are not known to enroll at another school
- Students who leave school and enter a program not qualifying as an elementary/secondary school
- Students who leave school between terms and are not known to enroll at another school
- Students of any age who drop out (by the definition)
- Students from Special Ed and other special, ungraded or alternative programs who drop out (by the definition)

NO: Do not include in dropout count

- Students who die
- Students who are out of school only for temporary periods, e.g., by suspension, extended illness
- Students known (by a transcript request or other information) to transfer to:
  - A public school
  - A nonpublic school or other state-approved educational program, that is, a program that continues the student's education on a [fulltime basis,] e.g., home-based instruction
- Students known to be transferred/shifted to another public institution, e.g., prison, juvenile institution, mental institution
- Students who move to another grade level

## Leaver-Completers

A nongraduate completer is a student who leaves school but finishes a high school equivalency through an alternative route.

- Count the total number of individuals in a given year (fall-to-fall) receiving a high school equivalency, e.g., GED, in programs outside the secondary school system (public and nonpublic).
- Count all completers, regardless of age.
- Do not double count. If a student is counted as a graduate, he/she should not be counted as a leaver-completer.

## When to Report Data

- Student count will be obtained annually on the basis of a fall count, the date of which is between the start of school and October 31 (by local/state discretion).

- Student count data for the Common Core of Data are due on March 15 for the current school year. [If data are needed earlier, estimates can be derived from data for previous year(s)].

- NOTE: Since dropout statistics are derived from comparing the students enrolled in Year B with those enrolled in Year A, the dropout data reported in the Spring of '89 will be for the '87-'88 school year.

## EXHIBIT 2

## SCHEDULE FOR REPORTING DROPOUT STATISTICS

- Total Student Count is obtained annually between the start of school and October 31.
- Since student count data reported to the Center for Statistics for the Common Core of Data are due on March 15 for the current school year, early estimates can be derived from previous year(s) data.
- Since dropout statistics are derived from comparing students enrolled in Year B with the same cohort enrollment in Year A, dropout data reported in the Spring of '89 will be for the '87-'88 school year.

TIMELINE

| | Year A (87-88) | | Year B (88-89) | | Year C (89-90) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fall | Spring | Fall | Spring | Fall | Spring |
| EXAMPLE 1 | | | | | | |
| | 7th grade count for class '93 | No Report | 8th grade count for class '93 | Dropout Rate Reported for class '93 covering 7th grade year | 9th grade count for class '93 | Dropout Rate Reported for class '93 covering 8th grade year |
| EXAMPLE 2 | | | | | | |
| | 11th grade count for class '89 | No Report | 12th grade count for class '89 | Dropout Rate Reported for class '89 covering 11th grade year | Graduation Rate (Spring Year B) accounting for 12th grade nongraduates | Dropout Rate Reported for class '89 |

**RECOMMENDATION:** Require the states to assign, according to strict guidelines, each student to one of the non-dropout categories, e.g., transfer, student repeating a grade.

If dropout statistics are to be meaningful and comparable, states and local data providers must be furnished specific guidelines for assigning students to appropriate categories, and technical assistance in implementing the guidelines. The proposed model follows a "residual" approach to counting dropouts, and thus requires accurate assignment of students to specific categories. States must monitor reporting to assure precise categorizations within states, and the Center for Statistics must monitor states to assure comparability across states. Once nonleaver students have been accounted for, the remaining students (students who cannot be accounted for in a nonleaver category) become dropouts.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Collect graduate and dropout data broken down by racial/ethnic group and by sex within racial/ethnic group.

Because the proportions of dropouts often vary substantially among different racial/ethnic groups, it is recommended that data be reported by racial/ethnic group. Without such a breakdown, severe problems within heavy concentrations of high-risk students will be obscured by the total student population. This is especially true in states with large student enrollments. For instance, federal and state policymakers want to know if increasing compensatory education funding or stiffening course requirements differentially affects schooling patterns among different groups of students.

Although there are only slight across-the-board sex differences in dropout rates, male and female student dropout rates often differ substantially within given racial/ethnic groups. For instance, according to several longitudinal studies, the highest risk category of students is black males. The lowest risk group is Asian males. It is only within racial/ethnic group that a data breakdown by sex is useful. The strong interactions between race and sex for school completion makes it critical that states collect these data.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Report dropout statistics (including co-statistics) by state within clusters of similar states.

It is not useful to compare dropout and graduation rates across states that have little in common in economy, resources, populations served, and other critical factors. It is more important to look at states that are similar with respect to relevant characteristics. The following features of states are useful in grouping states for comparison on dropout and graduation rates: (1) region; (2) population size and/or density; (3) racial/ethnic composition; (4) socioeconomic status of residents; (5) state wealth; (6) adult educational attainment; and (7) percent population (or student population) with limited English proficiency.

# APPENDIX

## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Dropout

| | Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dropout - student who withdraws from membership** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **BASIC DEFINITION** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| occurs during regular elementary term | • | | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | | • |
| occurs during regular secondary term | • | | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • |
| fails to graduate from secondary school (grade 12) | • | | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • |
| fails to complete an equivalent program of studies | • | | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • |
| occurs regardless of compulsory attendance age | • | | • | • | • | | | | • | • | • | | | | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| occurs even if minimum amount of school work has been completed | • | | • | • | • | | | | • | • | • | • | | | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • |
| **EXCEPTIONS** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Transfers** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| includes transfer to non public school | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| excludes transfer to another school | | | | | | | | • | | • | | | | | | | • | | • | | | • | • | | |
| includes transfers to school which cannot grant a H.S. diploma | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| includes those leaving after compulsory attendance age | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| includes transfers to schools or programs not approved by state board of education | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| excludes those leaving after compulsory attendance | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | • | | | | | | |

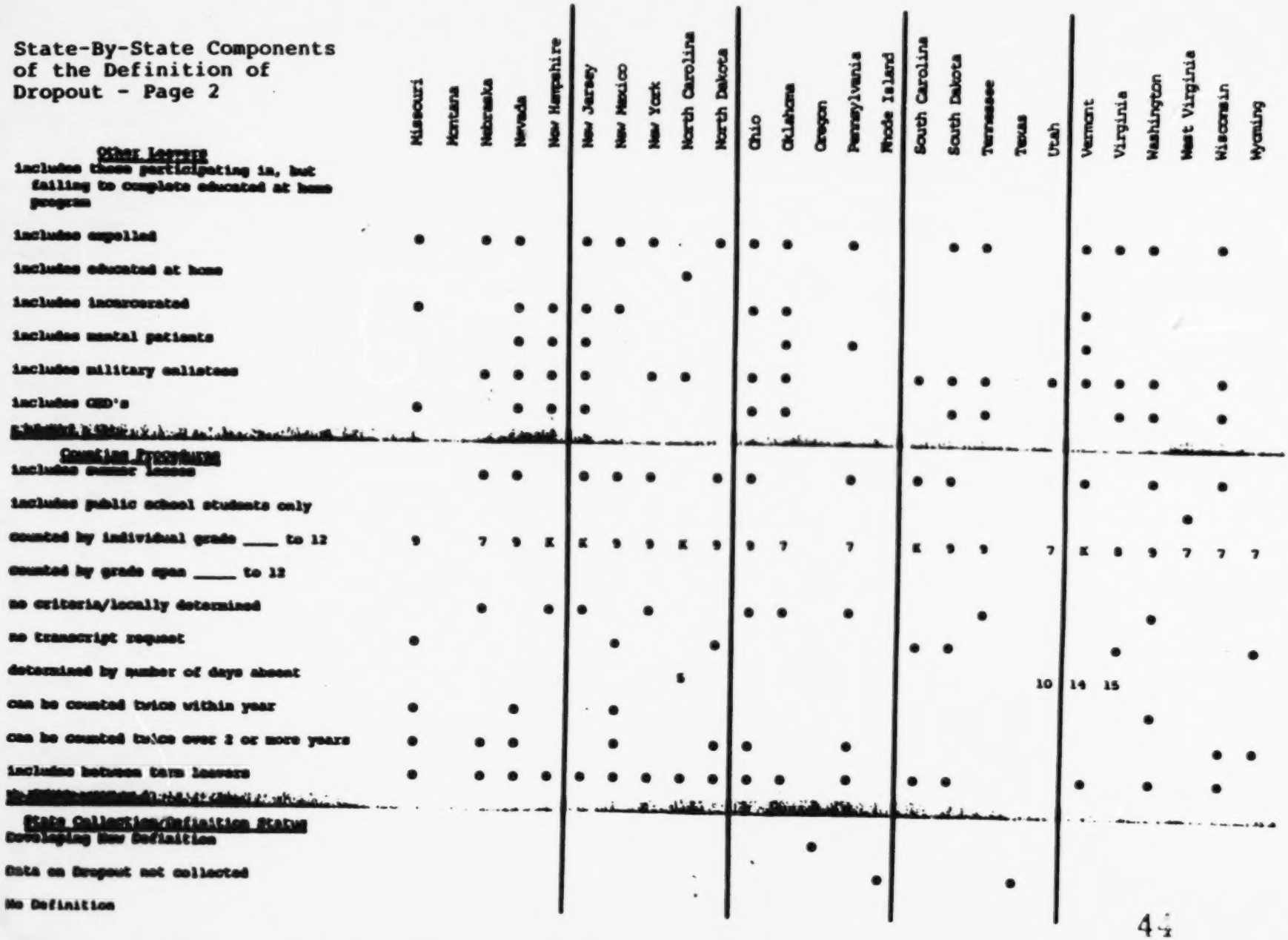
## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Dropout

| | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Carolina | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Rhode Island | South Carolina | South Dakota | Tennessee | Texas | Utah | Vermont | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dropout - student who withdraws from membership** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **BASIC DEFINITION** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| occurs during regular elementary term | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | | | | • | • | • | | • | • | | • | • | • | • |
| occurs during regular secondary term | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | | | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| fails to graduate from secondary school (grade 12) | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| fails to complete an equivalent program of studies | | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • |
| occurs regardless of compulsory attendance age | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| occurs even if minimum amount of school work has been completed | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| **EXCLUSIONS** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Transfers** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| includes transfer to non public school | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | |
| excludes transfer to another school | | | • | | | | | • | | | | | | • | | • | • | | | | | | | • | | • |
| includes transfers to school which cannot grant a H.S. diploma | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | |
| includes those leaving after compulsory attendance age | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| includes transfers to schools or programs not approved by state board of education | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| excludes those leaving after compulsory attendance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

# State-By-State Components of the Definition of Dropout - Page 2

| | Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Other Leavers** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Includes those participating in, but failing to complete educated at home program | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Includes expelled | ● | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Includes educated at home | ● | | | ● | | | | | | | | ● | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | ● | | | | |
| Includes incarcerated | ● | | | ● | | | | | | ● | ● | | | | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Includes mental patients | ● | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | ● |
| Includes military enlistees | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Includes GED's | ● | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● |
| **Counting Procedures** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Includes summer leavers | | | | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | ● | | |
| Includes public school students only | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Counted by individual grade ____ to 12 | K | | | 7 | | 7 | | 7 | 7 | PK | K | K | K | 9 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 7 | K | 7 | K | | | 9 | K |
| Counted by grade span _____ to 12 | | | K | | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 9 | | |
| No criteria/locally determined | ● | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| No transcript request | | | | | ● | | | | | | ● | | | ● | | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| Determined by number of days absent | | | | 10 | | | | | 45 | | 10 | 20 | | | | | | | | 5 | | | | 15 | |
| Can be counted twice within year | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | |
| Can be counted twice over 2 or more years | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | |
| Includes between term leavers | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● |
| **State Collection/Definition Status** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Dropout not collected | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

# State-By-State Components of the Definition of Dropout - Page 2



## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Graduate

| | Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Graduate - student who completes a prescribed program of studies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| receives formal recognition | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| [redacted] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| [redacted] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| completed within grade | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | |
| completes course of study during the summer | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | |
| excludes those who complete the GED | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | | • |
| fulfills unit course requirements | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| receives a regular high school diploma | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | |
| must pass proficiency exam | • | | • | • | • | | | • | | • | • | • | | | | | | | | | • | | | | • |
| includes GED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | • | • | |
| includes certificate of completion | | | | • | | | | | • | | | | | • | | | | | • | • | • | | | | • |
| includes certificate of attendance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| includes state equivalency certificate | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | |
| age limit for GED/graduate count | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 21 | | | 21 | |
| special ed certificate counted as graduate | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| [redacted] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| State Collection/Definition Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Graduates Not Collected | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Graduate

| | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Carolina | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Rhode Island | South Carolina | South Dakota | Tennessee | Texas | Utah | Vermont | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Graduate - student who completes a prescribed program of studies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| receives formal recognition | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| [redacted] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| completes twelfth grade | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| completes course of study during the summer | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| excludes those who complete the GED | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| fulfills unit course requirements | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| receives a regular high school diploma | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | |
| must pass proficiency exam | | | | • | | • | • | • | • | | | | | | | | | • | • | | | • | | | | |
| includes GED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | |
| includes certificate of completion | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | |
| includes certificate of attendance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | |
| includes state equivalency certificate | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| age limit for GED/graduate count | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| special ed certificate counted as graduate | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| [redacted] | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **State Collection/Definition Status** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Graduates Not Collected | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Expelled Student

| | Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expelled Student - student enrolled in a school | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| compelled by school board or designee to withdraw from school | • | | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| removed for extreme misbehavior or incorrigibility | • | | • | • | • | | | | | | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| removed for unsatisfactory achievement or progress in school work | • | | • | • | | | | | | | • | | | • | | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | • |
| DISCREPANCIES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school for detrimental behavior to self or other pupils | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | • | | | | |
| separated from school for the school term or year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | • | | | | | | |
| can be reinstated by governing board only | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | |
| separated from school for more than 5 consecutive days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | |
| suffered other penalty which automatically prevents completing school term or year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | • | | | | | | |
| separated from school only after parents have been requested for board hearing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school for extreme misbehavior | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school for a period not exceeding remainder of term or year and an additional year | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school upon fourth suspension | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | |
| State Collection/Definition Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Expelled Students Not Collected | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | | | • | | | • | • | | | | | | • | | • |

## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Expelled Student

| | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Carolina | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Rhode Island | South Carolina | South Dakota | Tennessee | Texas | Utah | Vermont | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Expelled Student - student expelled in a school** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| compelled by school board or designee to withdraw from school | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • |
| removed for extreme misbehavior or incorrigibility | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • |
| removed for unsatisfactory achievement or progress in school work | • | | | • | • | | • | | • | • | | | • | | • | | | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | |
| **DISCRETION** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school for detrimental behavior to self or other pupils | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | • | |
| separated from school for the school term or year | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| can be reinstated by governing board only | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school for more than 5 consecutive days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| suffered other penalty which automatically prevents completing school term or year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school only after parents have been requested for board hearing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | |
| separated from school for extreme misbehavior | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school for a period not exceeding remainder of term or year and an additional year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| separated from school upon fourth suspension | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **State Collection/Definition Status** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Expelled Students Not Collected | • | | | • | | | • | • | | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | | • |

## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Suspended Student

| | Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Suspended Student - students enrolled in a school:** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed temporarily (at least one school day) by principal | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| reported to the superintendent or other chief administrator | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| counted regardless of number of suspensions he/she receives | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | | ● |
| **DISCREPANCIES** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| has privileges revoked for a specified time | | | ● | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school for one to ten days | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school for more than ten days but not more than one year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school for up to five days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed by authorized disciplinarian: principal, superintendent, or governing board | | | | | ● | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| dismissed for reasons specified in state code | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| counted each time he/she is suspended | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | |
| remains in school during period privileges have been revoked | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school for a period not exceeding current plus succeeding semester | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed by authorized disciplinarian: teachers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school up to three days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **State Collection/Definition Status** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Suspended Students Not Collected | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## State-By-State Components of the Definition of Suspended Student

| | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Carolina | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Rhode Island | South Carolina | South Dakota | Tennessee | Texas | Utah | Vermont | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Suspended Student - students enrolled in [illegible] schools:** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed temporarily (at least one school day) by principal | • | | | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | |
| reported to the superintendent or other chief administrator | • | | | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | |
| counted regardless of number of suspensions he/she receives | • | | | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | | | • | • | • | • | | • | | |
| **DISCRIMINATES** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| has privileges revoked for a specified time | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school for one to ten days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • |
| dismissed from school for more than ten days but not more than one year | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • |
| dismissed from school for up to five days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed by authorized disciplinarian: principal, superintendent, or governing board | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | • |
| dismissed for reasons specified in state code | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| counted each time he/she is suspended | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| remains in school during period privileges have been revoked | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed from school for a period not exceeding current plus succeeding semester | | | | | | | | | | | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dismissed by authorized disciplinarian: teachers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | |
| dismissed from school up to three days | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | • | |
| **State Collection/Definition Status** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on Suspended Students Not Collected | • | | • | • | • | | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | |
| No Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Developing New Definition | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |